



## NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT: THE LESSONS OF HISTORY AND OPTIONS FOR THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

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### **Abstract:**

The logic of events and colonial legacy both largely foreordained Nigeria's initial foreign policy options. Thus, until 1975, the country played a relatively hesitant and minimal role in international affairs, both within and outside the African continent. During the 1960s, the underlying foreign policy objectives sought not to elicit any changes in Nigeria's foreign policy. But the events of the 1970s, especially the role played by Nigeria in the liberation of Angola and Mozambique, led to a rethinking of Nigeria's leadership role in Africa. In other words, although foreign policy pursuits in the First Republic (1960-66) merely portrayed the ambivalence between Nigeria's status as Africa's most populous and richly endowed country, and her inability to chart an independent foreign policy path, the Second Republic (1979-83) was an improvement. One reason for this was the fact that unlike the First Republic, the Second Republic had a glorious reputation and precedence to protect, namely, the vibrant foreign policy engagements of the proceeding military government of Murtala Mohammed. On the other hand, the first eight years of the Fourth Republic were characterised by economic diplomacy. It is important, therefore, that as the 21<sup>st</sup> century gradually but steadily thins down the world into a global village, countries like Nigeria should remain relevant. A major handicap to an aggressive foreign policy has been the domination by the executive arm of government of the foreign policy decision-making process in Nigeria especially during the period under review. It is against this background that the need arises for a re-definition of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives. It is also imperative for foreign policy decision-makers to be imbued with a sustained sense of history if Nigeria must take its rightful place in the comity of nations.

**Key Words:** Colonialism, Constitution, Democracy, Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, National Interest & Power

### **Introduction:**

The events of the early 1990s, especially the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the end of East-West conflicts (or the Cold War) have made it imperative for nations to review their foreign policy objectives and principles. This has become largely inevitable, given the fact that the end of the Cold War has not removed the spectre of international anarchy. Any nation that takes things for granted may, therefore, pale into oblivion in contemporary world politics. This is especially true since globalization is steadily turning the world into a global village.

For countries like Nigeria, there is a compelling need to remain relevant in today's world. It is time to stop, think and reason before moving ahead. A major handicap to rational discourse in the country's relations with the wider world is her inability or failure to positively utilize her status as Africa's most populous and most richly endowed nation to escape from her unenviable position as one of the poorest countries in the world today. It is true that a number of factors (domestic and external) have continued to influence Nigeria's foreign policy options. It is also true that until 1975, the country's role in international affairs was lackluster.

However, the new millennium poses both challenges and opportunities for Nigeria, and only a properly thought-out and well-articulated foreign policy can wash away the inglorious past in international relations. But her leaders and foreign policy decision-makers must have a sustainable sense of history. This is imperative if the country is to succeed in advancing and protecting the country's national interest. It is, in other words, absolutely necessary for policy-makers to analyze issues in such a manner that their understanding of them becomes much more deepened.

Nigeria's diplomatic history is replete with rhetorical proclamations of moral principles and declarations of public philosophy along the lines stipulated by the Charters of both the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union). These, to say the least, are heavy on symbolism but embarrassingly light on substance. Of course, the official rhetoric may be used to reflect the values, interests, and attitudes of policy-makers, or designed to win popular acceptance and support either at home or abroad, for courses of action planned or being planned. Whatever is the case, the foreign policy of every country in the world deals with two things: Firstly, it deals with the preservation of the country's independence and security. Secondly, it deals with the pursuit and protection of the economic interests of the country in question, especially those of its most influential groups. Any country's foreign policy at any moment is thus made up of goals or strategic objectives.

Against this background, this examination of Nigerian foreign policy and the democratic experience as well as the lessons of history and options for the 21<sup>st</sup> century seeks to bring into focus the underlying foreign policy objectives since 1960. What these goals are and what they have been, any changes in the goals, why such changes were necessary and why they were affected, shall all be highlighted. The scope of the study is restricted to the First Republic (1960-1966), the Second Republic (1979-1983) and the Fourth Republic up to 2007. The idea, as the title clearly indicates, is to examine developments in Nigerian foreign policy under democratically elected governments. By implication therefore, the years of military rule are excluded. However, references shall be made to such periods where necessary. It should also be pointed out that in both the First, Second and Fourth Republics, the executive, rather than the legislative arm of government, dominated foreign policy decision-making. Also, since policy is basically a course of action, the emphasis of this study is more on what policy-makers actually did than on what they said.

#### **Operational Definition of Concepts:**

##### **Foreign Policy:**

As a concept, foreign policy has defied any definite description or meaning. For one thing, as an expression of human behaviour, it cannot be fixed or predetermined, and for another, much of the process of diplomacy is still conducted in secrecy, so that it is difficult to give any precise definition of the term. But most writers and authorities on the subject agree that foreign policy has to do with the official course of actions and reactions of any given nation to events or developments in the external environment and the domestic conditions which influence such actions or reactions<sup>2</sup>.

##### **Democracy:**

This concept is no longer the classical slogan of, "Government of the people by the people and for the people." In contemporary times, it has come to mean the way citizens manage their national affairs, how they relate to each other, and how they take collective decisions that bear on their common future as members of the global family. According to Wole Soyinka, "Democracy does not begin or end with the ballot box, nor is it confined to national boundaries".<sup>3</sup> In other words, democracy is the question of what constitutes a good society, and by extension, a good nation.

##### **History:**

This is the systematic study of the past, both of ordinary peoples and those famous in peace and war. Its events are recorded in order of their occurrence so as to show, where possible, how one thing helps to lead to another. It is, therefore anachronistic to say that History is mere story telling. In the words of Michael Winnock, "History... is a sort of humanism, an introduction to tolerance and respect for others".<sup>3</sup> Its importance as an academic discipline lies in the presentness of the past; that is, on the fact that the past is always impinging on the present.

##### **National Interest:**

This refers to those values or interests which a nation so cherishes that she would rather go to war than compromise. Included here would be the overall well-being of the citizens, as well as the protection of the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity. As Osita Eze has argued, "The national interest is inextricably wedded to the leadership of a nation and apparently depends on the aggregate need disposition, ideology and perceptions of the role of incumbents".<sup>4</sup>

##### **Nigerian Foreign Policy in the First Republic (1960 – 1966):**

Nigeria was one of the seventeen African states that became independent in 1960. On attaining independence, she became a member of the Commonwealth, the United Nations, and of course the Organization of African Unity. But as earlier pointed out, the foundation of Nigeria's foreign policy was laid before 1960. The machinery of the country's foreign policy predated formal political independence, for consequent upon the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution there was devolution of power for foreign affairs from Britain to the Federal Government of Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> From that year, Nigeria began prosecuting her own foreign policy, though there was a provision that the country was to be involved mainly in such external relations as may from time to time be entrusted to the Federal Government by her majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

It was not however, until after independence in October 1960 that Nigeria really began to assert her position in international relations. Indeed, it was the speech at the United Nations in October 1960 by the then Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa that signalled Nigeria's sovereign statehood. Before this time, Nigeria's diplomatic missions abroad were basically dependent on Britain. But with independence, the External Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's office was transformed into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations. Dr. Jaja Wachukwu was appointed the first Foreign Minister in 1961. Prior to that date, the Prime Minister himself was in charge of the Ministry, assisted by two Ministers of State, and the Ministry had only thirty-seven trained External Affairs Officers.

Balewa's foreign policy objectives were made manifest in his statement on foreign affairs to the House of Representative on August 20, 1960. His government, he stated, was concerned primarily with the following:

- ✓ Safeguarding the interests of the federation and its citizens;
- ✓ Membership of the Commonwealth and the United Nations;

- ✓ Not identifying with any of the power blocs as a matter of routine;
- ✓ Devotion to Africa-oriented policies in the interest of continental unity; and
- ✓ Total de-colonization of the African continent<sup>7</sup>

Balewa's foreign policy was merely guided by its felt need to maintain the status quo, hence its conservative outlook. Without any fear of contradiction, Nigeria's Africa policy during the First Republic could be said to have been lackluster. For example, the government's decision to support the United Nations' position in the Congo crisis was premised on the need to toe the line of the western powers, rather than what was good for Africa. Balewa rejected calls by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah for African countries to band together and work out a solution to the crisis.

Similarly, the response of the Balewa administration to apartheid in South Africa and colonialism in Africa was generally lukewarm. The administration's efforts towards the eradication of these twin evils, on most occasions, never went beyond mere rhetoric. This was in spite of the fact that other African countries looked up to Nigeria to champion the continent's cause internationally. Yet, Nigeria could not assert herself forcefully even in the African continent despite her abundant human and natural resources. If anything, her much vaunted leadership role was timid and scornful.

Thus, Balewa's government opposed apartheid and racism on moral grounds, while its attitude to decolonization was predicated on the need to avoid, in the government's reasoning, the kind of chaos that attended the granting of independence to the then Congo in June, 1960.<sup>8</sup> It was the government's romance with the major Western powers, especially Britain, the United States and France, more than any abstract consideration of morality that paralysed Nigeria's foreign policy during the period under review. However, Nigeria did criticize France over that country's nuclear tests in the Sahara. She even cut diplomatic relations with France over the incident. Britain was also criticised over its foot-dragging towards the racist government of Ian Smith in the then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In addition, Nigeria under Balewa, for security reasons, considered her policy and relations with her immediate neighbours as of utmost priority. That explains the government's role in the establishment of the Chad Basin Commission and the Niger River Commission in 1964. In later years, these gave birth to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

But in her overall relations with the wider world, Nigeria was more or less a sideline participant. Her foreign policy at that time lacked the dynamism and vision necessary to make a mark in international diplomacy. It has been stated earlier that Balewa's foreign policy was pro-West. The 1960s witnessed a peak in the frosty relations between the advanced capitalist countries of North America and Western Europe and the communist-bloc countries of Eastern Europe and China. For example, while only five diplomatic plates were allocated to the Soviet embassy in Lagos, one hundred each was given to the Americans and the British. Other instances of partiality to the West included the Anglo-Nigeria Defence Pact; Nigeria's support for the resumption of atomic testing by the United States early in 1962, whereas a year earlier in 1961 she had roundly condemned the former USSR for the breach of the moratorium on atomic testing; Balewa's defence of the U.S.-Belgian reserve operation in the Congo late in 1964, and his failure to condemn U.S. involvement in Vietnam in 1965 even when public opinion in most western capitals favoured U.S. withdrawal from that country. Furthermore, no foreign aid was sought from the former Soviet Union; scholarships for Nigerian students were not received with enthusiasm; and the first trade agreement with that country was not signed until 1963. Yet, Nigeria claimed to have been a non-aligned country.

The fact remains, however, that during the early years of independence, Nigeria was courted by both the U.S. (representing the capitalist world) and the former Soviet Union (representing the communist world) for purely ideological reasons. Thus, the U.S. and Britain were determined to ensure that Nigeria remained in the so-called "free world" as a showpiece of Western-style democracy, while the then USSR was keen on building a socialist society in Nigeria. That was why Nigeria was considered strategically important so much so that the U.S. government set up a communication satellite tracking station in Kano in 1960, and the former Soviet Union tried to undermine U.S. presence in Nigeria by subtly directing Nigeria's attention to the evils implicit in allowing western capitalists to control the economy. But these did not sway Nigeria's position too far away from her pro-West stance.

With respect to the Middle East crisis, Balewa's religious inclinations affected Nigeria's foreign policy. African leaders, unlike their counterparts in the developed countries, exert more influence on their nations' foreign policies. Nigeria's position in the Arab-Israeli conflict was biased in favour of the Arabs who are of course, Moslems. However, because of the peculiar nature of the Independence constitution, the former Eastern and Western Regions maintained cordial relations with Israel, unlike the situation in the then Northern Region. The Federal Government, on its part could not restrain the regions from taking whatever courses of action they wanted. Most importantly, the role of interest groups in influencing Nigeria's stance on the Middle East cannot be overemphasised. For instance, dissent and pressure reflected essentially the concerns of religious and regional interests. While the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), which held sway in the North, urged the Federal government to sever all links with Israel, the Eastern and Western regional governments reaffirmed their friendship with Israel. While Ahmadu Bello, Premier of the then Northern Region insisted that the state of

Israel has never existed (echoing the stand of the Arabs), M. I. Okpara, Premier of the then Eastern Region, proclaimed himself an Israeli, while S. L. Akintola did not hide his support for Israel. These leaders' positions did not necessarily represent the views and values of their constituencies but those of the most influential groups in the nation. In the words of F. C. Ogene, "Groups aggregate the interests of the individuals and also articulate these interests."<sup>9</sup> From these instances, it was the political and business classes that influenced the political decisions of the governments in respect of the Arab-Israeli debacle. It is, therefore, possible to conclude that the views of these interests exerted considerable influence over the policy adopted towards Israel. The Federal government adopted a policy that merely tolerated Israeli presence in the former Eastern and Western regions.

#### **The Second Republic (1979 – 1983):**

October 1, 1979 witnessed the inauguration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari as Nigeria's first executive president. This also marked Nigeria's second attempt at democratic governance following the chain of events that began in January 1960 and culminated in the Nigeria - Biafra war of 1967 - 1970, and which saw Nigeria's first experience of military rule (or is it misrule) from 1966 till 1979. President Shagari inherited a foreign policy that was a radical departure from what used to be, especially between 1960 and 1974. Indeed, the foreign policy credentials of the Murtala Muhammed and Olusegun Obasanjo era were intimidating. For the first time in her history, Nigeria looked at the U.S. and Britain straight into the eyes and not only recognised the nationalist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in Angola but also donated a huge amount of money to the government led by that party. Nigeria's relations with the U.S. plunged to its lowest ebb because Nigeria did not toe U.S. lines and refused to recognize the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which had the backing of the U.S. The situation was such that the U.S. felt humiliated, and become openly hostile to the Nigerian government.

But the foreign policy posture of the Shagari administration was not as bold as that of his immediate predecessors. It was also not as unexciting as that of the Balewa government. However, unlike the Balewa government which had little or no constitutional restraints in the conduct of foreign policy, the 1979 presidential constitution, in theory and practice, limited the power of the president in the area of foreign policy. Section 14 stipulated that the conduct of foreign policy devolved on the President and the Legislature. In other words, the president did not have any monopoly over foreign policy decisions. For instance, Section 12 provided that the National Assembly had to enact into law any treaty between Nigeria and any foreign country before it can become legal. Furthermore, the Legislature had to approve all appointments for ambassadorial posts made by the president.

Yet, in the actual conduct of foreign policy, the executive, under the 1979 constitution, had some institutional advantages over the legislature. For one thing, the executive arm of government had vast resources at its disposal, and for another, the central government had the advantage of a large bureaucracy and the attendant patronage which the Legislature did not have. The important thing, however, is that the foreign policy objectives of the Shagari administration did not depart radically from those of his predecessors. For instance, in his maiden broadcast to the nation on October 1, 1979, the President made a pledge to continue to make Africa the centre-piece of Nigerian foreign policy. He expressed his government's determination to end racial bigotry and colonialism in southern Africa and oppression in the continent and elsewhere. Furthermore, he reaffirmed Nigeria's faith in and support for the U.N., the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the OAU, the ECOWAS and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Thus, exactly 20 years after Balewa went to the U.N. to assert Nigeria's sovereignty and enumerate her foreign policy objective, Shagari went to the same forum to stress a new beginning, a sort of renewal and rejuvenation of the issues noted earlier.

It was however, not easy to move these policy pronouncements from the realm of rhetoric to practical policies. Though the President and his External Affairs Minister played very dominant roles in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, they clashed not only with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but also with the career diplomats in the then Ministry of External Affairs. The clash with the Senate Committee was occasioned by the government's decision to give out ten million Naira (N10,000,000.00) to Zimbabwe on her independence. Here, the Minister, Ishaya Audu, was reprimanded for not seeking and securing the approval of the Committee before making the offer. The second case had to do with the "effrontery" of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs in contesting the list of external representations with his Minister. His refusal to yield resulted in his being sent on compulsory leave.

It is therefore, clearly evident that the pursuit of Nigeria's foreign policy during the Second Republic was not as easy as that of the First Republic. In the former case, foreign policy implementation was more or less ad hoc, and challenges like those of Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome where Nigerians were maltreated and indeed massacred, were ignored by the Balewa government. But in the Second Republic, the constitutional provisions curtailed the powers of the president. Moreover, President Shagari exposed his highest ranking card rather too early when he told the United Nations General Assembly that his priority in foreign affairs would be South Africa and that oil would be his major weapon. In addition, whereas the Independence (or 1963) constitution allowed the regional governments to share many of their powers with the central government in the



area of foreign relations, the 1979 constitution clearly delineated the powers of the central government in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. This was probably done in order to avoid the abuse of such freedom, as was the case in the First Republic. Thus, the formal executive authority granted in the exclusive legislative list under the 1979 constitution included the conduct of foreign affairs, defence, negotiation of treaties, foreign trade, and foreign investments.

The Shagari government's African policy included the Nigeria- Cameroun border controversy, the issue of apartheid and white supremacist regimes in South Africa and Zimbabwe, the Western Sahara crisis, and the civil war in Chad. That government's handling of these issues was most embarrassing and indeed uninspiring. While good counsel prevailed in the case of Nigeria's border dispute with Cameroun following the killing of five Nigerian soldiers by Cameroonian troops in 1981, Nigeria's forceful rhetoric on the Southern African issue did not yield any immediate dividends. On the Western Sahara, the issue was one of decolonization. Morocco was locked in a dispute with the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (S.A.D.R. - a nationalist movement) over independence for the territory. But Morocco was bent on controlling the territory, and Nigeria was not too enthusiastic about getting involved in the dispute, probably because the area in question was not within the immediate borders of Nigeria. Whatever be the case, opinions are divided on the real motives behind Nigeria's non-challant attitude.<sup>10</sup> With regard to the civil war in Chad, Nigeria's next-door neighbour, the foreign policy thrust of the Shagari administration was to contain Muammar Gaddafi's antics and involvement in the war. Libya withdrew her troops and an OAU peace-keeping force was sent there. Nigeria employed both bilateral and multilateral contacts to ensure a restoration of peace in Chad. She involved the OAU, France and Francophone African states in the Chadian crisis.

#### **The Fourth Republic (1999 – 2007):**

The emergence of Olusegun Obasanjo as Nigeria's second executive president in 1999 coincided with the resurgence of globalization and the dawn of a new millennium. These developments, however, did not radically alter Nigeria's foreign policy posture. Her national interest remained basically the same, except that the end of the Cold War and the new global economic realities reshaped a new paradigmatic shift towards greater international economic cooperation. Thus, in a September 8, 2000 speech at the United Nations Millennium Speech in New York, United States, the then Nigerian President stressed the need for the evolution of a new system of international economic cooperation that would result in the eradication of abject poverty and integration of countries like Nigeria into the globalizing world economy. This is what has been referred to as 'Nigeria's diplomatic renaissance', because Nigerian leaders came to realise that there were new forces in the international system which were turning the world into a global village.<sup>11</sup>

Nigerian foreign policy under Obasanjo had an obvious economic slant and sought among other things, to manage the country's embarrassing external debts profile, search for foreign investments, and to recover the monies looted by Sani Abacha and his cohorts. It also sought to reintegrate the country into the comity of nations consequent upon its ostracisation by the international community during the Abacha years. To this end, Obasanjo renewed and strengthened Nigeria's trade relations with the United States, Britain, France and Germany, countries that dominate both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The administration also deepened its commitment to continental and regional cooperation and integration through a plan to undertake a gas pipeline project linking the Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Nigeria on the one hand, and a West African pipeline project, linking Benin, Ghana, Niger and Togo, on the other.

Nigeria's role in setting up the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) under Obasanjo is equally commendable as was her continued recognition of Africa as the centre-piece of Nigerian foreign policy. The country played an important role in the formation of the African Union (AU), and continued to find ways and means of amicably resolving conflicts in many parts of Africa. Thus, an office on Conflict Resolution was created in the Presidency, while a Ministry of Integration and Cooperation in Africa was established. Also, it was in 2007 that the concept of Citizen Diplomacy was introduced into the lexicon of Nigerian foreign policy, ostensibly expounded to project the citizen as the new centrepiece of Nigerian foreign policy.

In all, the conduct of Nigerian foreign policy between 1999 and 2007 was not too inspiring. The "military garrison" approach of the president did not result in any significant economic gains. There was widespread corruption among members of his government and party and this, no doubt vitiated his many image-laundering trips abroad. This was worsened by his over-bearing influence on foreign policy decision-making and implementation. Sule Lamido, Olu Adeniji and Ojo Maduekwe, who variously served as Foreign Affairs Ministers under Obasanjo, merely walked in his shadows. Similarly, the National Assembly became a mere rubber-stamp as far as Nigerian foreign policy was concerned. The Senate and House Committees on Foreign Relations existed only on paper and hardly questioned the president's vaunted "economic diplomacy" which cost billions of tax payers' money through his many unnecessary foreign trips.

#### **The Lessons of History:**

The most important lesson of history in respect of Nigerian foreign policy and the democratic experiment is that for too long, foreign policy decision-making and implementation have centred on the person

of the National Chief Executive. For instance, at the time Abubakar T. Balewa became Prime Minister in 1960, foreign policy decision-making was under his office. Then known as the External Affairs Division, it was later transformed into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations with Jaja Wachukwu as Minister in charge in 1961. Before the appointment of Wachukwu, the Prime Minister himself was in charge of the Ministry and was assisted by two ministers of state and about 37 trained External Affairs Officers. These ran the affairs of the Ministry in Lagos and covered the overseas offices. Yet, the political framework in place then, namely, the parliamentary system, placed the conduct of foreign relations within the control of the Prime Minister, though regional governments under the 1960 constitution had a degree of independence in the area of foreign relations. That explains why the Eastern and Western Regions maintained cordial relations with Israel, unlike the Northern Region during the Arab-Israeli face-off.

One reason why foreign policy decision-making was the Prime Minister's exclusive prerogative was because he was also a Member of Parliament. Thus, he was not a total stranger in the legislative arm of government. However, this did not mean that members of the opposition in the legislature could not take him to task on issues relating to foreign policy.<sup>12</sup> The important thing is that there was a pathetic lag between Balewa as an individual and his position as the Prime Minister of Nigeria.

Military intervention in national politics, especially the institutional framework provided by the creation of states in 1966, did somehow rectify the lack of political power that the centre in Balewa's time displayed in the face of regional interference in foreign relations. Thus, under the military, the conservative garb of Nigerian foreign policy was jettisoned for a more aggressive approach, especially under the Murtala/Obasanjo government. The impact of Nigeria's buoyant economy in the conduct of her foreign policy during the period is all too obvious to merit any discussion here.

Suffice it to say, however, that issues such as the increased support for the Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union (ZANU-PF) led by Robert Mugabe and the subsequent condemnation of the Anglo-American peace proposals, the nationalization of the British Petroleum Company's assets in Nigeria, contribution to the historic Lancaster Conference on Zimbabwe, and mediation in the Chadian and Western Sahara conflicts, are evidences of Nigeria's renewed dynamism in international relations. Though these moves were made by the military government immediately before it handed over power to civilians, they nonetheless laid the foundation on which the in-coming civilian government was to build on and sustain a foreign policy posture commensurate with Nigeria's towering status in Africa and indeed the Third World.

The 1979 constitution was designed to accommodate the special needs of the Nigerian society by avoiding the lack of a clear perception of political association, which could suit the realities of Nigeria. Put differently, the 1979 constitution would appear to have set out to utilize the federal arrangements to rectify the political problems that were threatening the survival of the Nigerian state in the first decade of independence. It also diverted the attention of primary decision-makers from foreign policy matters. Its major thrust in the area of foreign policy was the promotion of African unity, world peace, and international cooperation and understanding.

By the terms of the constitution, the President was the pivot of the foreign policy process, although there was some degree of power sharing or "checks and balances" to limit the abuse of power. For example, the President was to appoint and receive Ambassadors, High Commissioners and foreign representatives. He was also empowered to negotiate, sign and implement treaties on matters in the Exclusive list. However, such treaties had to be enacted into law by the National Assembly, and where a treaty related to matters not on the Exclusive list, such a treaty or act of the National Assembly had to be ratified by a majority of the State Houses of Assembly. The 1999 constitution retained all these positions.

Some questions of historical importance arise from these constitutional provisions. For instance, what becomes the fate of Nigeria's image if she does not respond quickly to serious developments in the external environment? Did Nigeria's foreign policy under the 1979 and 1999 constitutions reflect the priorities of the nation, which should really be the protection of social values and national security? Furthermore, should African unity and world peace take precedence over national well-being, defence, and security?

These limitations on executive power also gave rise to two major problems. In the first place, the deliberative process itself as well as the need for Senate approval, undermined the speed and secrecy needed on such sensitive issues. But the Legislature under the Second Republic and the first eight years of the Fourth Republic was largely inactive on matters of foreign policy. There was a Senate Foreign Relations Committee, no doubt. Unfortunately, its activities fell far short of articulating a forceful position on Nigerian foreign policy during the period. If anything, the creation of that Committee, to use the words of one observer, was a "...sheepish imitation of what obtains in the United States of America".<sup>13</sup> For instance, in the Second Republic, the National Assembly made no reasonable comments when Grenada was invaded by the U.S and its Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, assassinated in 1982. A second problem arising from the constitutional limitation of executive powers in foreign policy was on the inevitable reaction of Nigeria's immediate neighbours who no doubt relied upon a swift response when assistance would be called for. The attitude of the government of the Second Republic in this regard diminished Nigeria's influence in the West African sub-region, though she

played a leading role in restoring peace to Chad in 1982. But Nigeria never took any bold unilateral action in this regard. Instead, she had to involve France, West Germany (as it then was) as well as Britain and the U.S. Indeed, Shagari had a cozy relationship with the Western World, and the bulk of Nigeria's military and economic ties remained with the West throughout the Second Republic.

In sum, the Legislature in the Second Republic conceded the role of foreign policy to the President despite constitutional provisions to the contrary. On occasions such as the deployment of Nigerian troops to Chad and the duration of their stay there, the legislative arm of government exercised its constitutional powers only in a benign if not ignorant manner. As a matter of fact, it can be argued that in spite of constitutional provisions on the role of the legislature in foreign policy decision-making in the 1979 constitution, the legislators, either out of ignorance or greed or both, were more interested in themselves than in influencing, in any appreciable manner, the formulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy. The experience during the first eight years of the current Fourth Republic (1999 – 2007) was not different. Olusegun Obasanjo, the then president, appropriated the role of the Foreign Affairs Minister though both Houses of the National Assembly had committees on foreign relations. With the excuse of reintegrating Nigeria into the international community and searching for foreign investments, the president undertook many trips abroad. There was, indeed, no coherence in the foreign policy pursuits of his government, and the acclaimed cancellation of Nigeria's debts by the Paris Club of creditors which was a mere statement of intent predicated upon the fulfilment of certain conditions by Nigeria.

The place of history in our analysis of Nigerian foreign policy under the First and Second Republics is too obvious. History is an agent of a course, for in examining the failures of our past foreign policy activities and their consequences, it suggests ways of avoiding the mistakes of the past in the future. In other words, the only reasonable approach to foresight is hindsight. Furthermore, history is logically an avowed academic discipline in the sense that it has basic objectives and a creed of idealism, namely to inculcate patriotism and moral values in those whose responsibility it is to make decisions affecting the lives of the rest of the citizens. Without a sense of history of past efforts and failures, policy-makers may be doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. History seeks to prepare citizens for lives of personal integrity and preparation for public life, especially in a democratic setting, such as the one Nigeria has today.

It is against this background, therefore, that Nigerian foreign policy behaviours and orientations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be foresighted, pragmatic, and people-oriented. As the experience of the past have shown, although Nigeria's national interest has often been projected as the country's major foreign policy objective, this has been so more at the level of rhetoric than in practice. Part of the explanation for this has to do with the personality of the sovereign. Furthermore, with the world further coalescing into a global village, it is an important lesson of history for the country to adopt a more dynamic foreign policy, one that must take into account the prevailing contradictions between Nigeria's domestic politics, economy, and external relations. In other words, the political leaders have to make democracy workable and sustainable by improving the country's economic situation. History has shown us that there is a positive correlation between economic prosperity, internal stability, and dynamic foreign policy pursuits.

#### **Options for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:**

Nigerian foreign policy during the First and Second Republics was conditioned in a very significant manner, by the ideological division of the world into the East and the West. But the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 31 December, 1991. A new era then started in international relations, and a new thinking of Nigeria's foreign policy decision-making and implementation must take shape. This calls for a re-definition of Nigeria's real national interest; it also calls for sustained and dedicated efforts at solving the domestic problems of hunger, poverty, disease, ignorance, religious bigotry, ethnicism, and hopelessness among Nigerians.

Against this background and granted that globalization (which is nothing more than an economic and social integration process on a world scale, and the mode of production made possible by the scientific revolution) is now a major theme in contemporary international relations, what must Nigeria do to remain relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? This question is pertinent because the emerging post-Cold War world order is not merely characterised by ideological and military unipolarity dominated by the U.S., but is also witnessing the rise and consolidation of regional economic blocs and new patterns of security and strategic thinking.

There appears to be no doubt that in the unfolding scenario, Africa is going to remain a weak partner in the world system. It is up to countries like Nigeria to lead the continent out of this dim nocturnal landscape. But how can Nigeria perform this onerous task, considering the fact that politics and economics are so closely interwoven that diplomatic relations among nations are more or less largely determined by economic considerations, and granted that the power and influence wielded by the industrialised nations in the international system are derived from their economic strength and technological expertise while their political strategies and diplomatic postures are determined by their national economic interests.

The answer lies in Nigeria adopting two related options: a restructuring of the national economy, and a re-definition of her real national interest in international relations. Experts agree that there is a positive

correlation between domestic economic and political structures and foreign policy. In fact, it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between domestic policy and foreign policy. For instance, Henry Kissinger, a former U.S. Secretary of State, has noted that in the traditional conception of international relations, units treated almost as personalities conduct inter-state relations. Because of this, the domestic structure is taken as given and foreign policy is taken as beginning where domestic policy ends.<sup>14</sup>

Restructuring the Nigerian economy has to involve giving a new meaning to development. The concept should move from the main -stream Western idea of the propensity to save and accumulate capital to the more relevant one of improving the well-being of the individual and the state to which he belongs. Development, in other words, should denote an unending improvement in the capacity of the individual and society to control social forces for the benefit of Nigeria and the world at large. To attain real development, an alternative approach has to be adopted.

Such an approach should take cognizance of the human factor in the development process. It should in essence, seek to dismantle neo-colonial capitalism and the prevalence of pseudo-planning which have over the years, tended to be little more than an appeal to foreign aid without necessarily proposing how this anomaly could be corrected. In addition, the conception of development has to take into account the heinous and toxic imbalance between the various ethnic groups. One way of achieving this objective is to adopt the Basic Needs Approach which has to do with the provision of basic consumer goods like food, clothing, housing shelter and the other socially defined necessities; universal access to basic needs, for example, primary and adult education, potable water, preventive and curative health programmes, environmental health, and communication; the right to productive employment (including self-employment) yielding both high enough productivity and equitable enough remuneration to allow each household to meet its basic personal consumption out of its own income; an infrastructure capable of producing the goods and services required; generating a surplus to finance basic communal services; providing investment sufficient to sustain the increase in productive forces needed to advance towards the fulfilment of basic needs; and finally, mass participation in decision-taking and the implementation of projects.<sup>15</sup>

It is almost axiomatic that socio-economic egalitarianism in Nigeria would contribute not only to social justice but to the overall economic growth of the Nigerian state. To this end, the level of satisfaction of basic needs in Nigeria should be measured simultaneously in per capita consumption of each basic good separately. In other words, there should be no trade-offs between the type of consumption as in the case where there is one number representing the value of out-put given by Gross National Product (GNP) or welfare function. This is so because the method used for measuring out-put in an ideal economic model should literally study out-put as a vector of real goods rather than as a number or a Naira-sum of value of goods produced at market prices. Of course, it should be remembered that the growth rates by which the desired objectives of the Basic Needs Approach are achieved has to include the implementation of an active policy to better distribute goods and services and to eliminate deficits in international trade.

The second limb towards preparing Nigeria for a more prominent role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in re-defining her real national interest. The well-being of Nigerians everywhere and anywhere in the world should form a top priority objective in the country's foreign policy decision-making and implementation. A situation where the citizens of their host countries slaughter Nigerians at the slightest provocation does not do much to her standing as a regional superpower. The crises in Liberia and Sierra Leone exposed the poverty of Nigeria's Afro-centric policy.

If Nigeria must remain relevant in the new world order as well as expand the diplomatic niche she has established over the years, she should work towards integrating clearly defined economic objectives into the foreign policy framework. The necessity for an economic diplomacy is informed by the fact that the contemporary international environment is characterised by increasing protectionism, declining commodity prices, deteriorating terms of trade and the concomitant rise in the debt burdens of Third world countries like Nigeria. The country's foreign policy should be credible and exhibit foresight. There is a need for the foreign policy to be flexible to adjust to the imperatives of national interest. The well-being and security of her citizens are bound up with Nigerian's ability to secure a better deal within the global trade and financial systems.

Furthermore, the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the bi-polar world means an increase in the role of regional blocs in contemporary international relations. Nigeria should, therefore, not toy with her membership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), among others. But her membership and participation in such organizations must not be at the expense of her domestic policy. In the words of Emeka Anyaoku:

*In a period marked by the proliferation of international bodies in pursuit of multilateralism, it has clearly been right for Nigeria to seek to avail itself of the benefits derivable from membership of these bodies. But such benefits have in every case to be correctly identified and actively pursued.*<sup>16</sup>

For instance, although Nigeria's involvement in Africa is honoured by tradition and prescribed by her successive conditions, and defensible on the grounds of enlightened self-interest, the huge sums of money spent on the peacekeeping operations in Chad in the 1980s and in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s hardly ever



justify the country's involvement because she had no identifiable national interest, especially in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Where there is no compelling need for a unilateral involvement by Nigeria in any African crisis, she should involve other countries, and the conditions for such involvement must be clearly spelt out.

Finally, the Ministry Foreign of Affairs should be adequately provided for. There is a need to arrange refresher courses for Foreign Affairs Officers and a need for a programme of reform aimed at improving its discharge of the assigned duties. In addition, Nigeria's economic diplomacy should operate with the full collaboration of the organised private sector. The idea is that foreign policy inputs should not be the exclusive preserve of the executive and legislative arms of government (especially the former). These would include the Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria (MAN), Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), among others. The involvement of these and similar organizations would lead to the integration of economic objectives into the foreign policy decision-making process.

#### **Conclusion:**

This paper has highlighted the shortcomings of Nigerian foreign policy under the First, Second, and Fourth Republics. Under both the parliamentary and presidential systems of government, the performance of Nigerian foreign policy was disastrous. A major reason for this was the concentration of foreign policy-making and implementation in the hands of the Chief Executive (The Prime Minister or the President, as the case may be). The National Assembly under the Second and Fourth Republics did not play meaningful roles in foreign policy-making. There is need for Nigeria to remain stable and strong internally. That way, Nigerian foreign policy will help to guide domestic perceptions. This will, in turn, promote Nigeria's economic diplomacy in a world that is moving steadily into a global village. The first manifestation of the world unification process (or the so-called globalization) is the gradual emergence of mankind as an entity aspiring to exercise its sovereignty and to deprive the old sovereign states of their authority.

Therefore, an important lesson of history is that there is a trend towards unity in the contemporary world, though this is likely to be opposed by the tendency towards fragmentation, which represents an expression of the revival of nationalism. Nigeria should, as a matter of necessity, brace up for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To this end, her new foreign policy thrust should be citizen-based, taking into account, however, the implications of globalization. Yet, globalization should not be an impediment to citizen diplomacy, which has been defined as:

*...the consciousness and deliberate efforts of a nation state to cultivate the support, understanding and eventual deployment of the citizens for the task of executing its foreign policy.*<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, citizenship diplomacy is said to entail:

*...the creation of an environment in which every citizen both at home and abroad sees himself as the symbol of his country's foreign policy; he is expected to behave and act in a manner that will enable rather than disenable (sic) his country's foreign policy.*<sup>18</sup>

This idea is in tandem with Chapter II (Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy) of both the 1979 and 1999 constitutions. Section 14 (subsection 2 a –c) of both constitutions provide that:

- ✓ sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria;
- ✓ the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government; and
- ✓ the participation by the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of this constitution.<sup>19</sup>

But the performances of democratically-elected governments in Nigeria appear to have diminished rather than highlighted the relevance of her citizens in the foreign policy decision-making process. Emasculated both politically and economically, the citizens have failed to assert their indispensability in both domestic politics and foreign policy calculations. As Asobie has forcefully argued:

*What the Nigerian working class needs do is to insert itself actively and vigorously into the growing worldwide citizens' movement. It should participate in the activities of that movement. It should contribute to and adopt the global foreign policy of that movement. Then the Nigerian working class will see itself re-interpreting international relations, foreign policy and globalization...*<sup>20</sup>

Only then will the government be compelled by circumstances to fulfil its statutory obligations to the citizens through the creation of the enabling environment that will elicit in them a sense of common identity, loyalty and destiny with the Nigerian state. Only then too will Nigerian foreign policy command the international respectability it so desires by reducing incidences of corruption and official administrative ineptitude.

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